

## STAFF REPORT

To: PED Committee

Date: May 15, 2012

From: Ken Putnam, Transportation Director

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Transportation Planner

Subject: Complete Streets Policy

Summary Statement: Consideration of a complete streets policy.

Review: In response to City Council's strategic operating plan multimodal transportation goals, staff convened a multi-disciplinary working group to draft a complete streets policy for the city. The proposed policy is based on best practices identified by the National Center for Complete Streets, and meets the center's criteria for a comprehensive complete streets policy. This policy will apply to new and existing city streets. It is complemented by the NCDOT's complete streets policy and implementation guidelines. The proposed policy has been presented to and endorsed by the Transit and Greenway Commissions, and the Asheville Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force.

Implementation: The policy is the first step. Implementation guidance will have to be developed if the policy is to have "teeth." The first steps will be reviewing the UDO and the city's engineering standards and specifications and modifying them as necessary, most likely during the regular reviews of the documents rather than as a stand alone review. If determined to be necessary for full implementation of the policy, staff may also seek adoption of guidance similar to the recently published NCDOT complete streets guidelines.

Strategic Operating Plan: This policy fulfills an objective of the City Council's Strategic Operating Plan: *City Council adoption of a Complete Streets policy.*

### Pros:

- Fulfills an objective of the Strategic Operating Plan
- Formalizes a balanced approach to meeting the transportation needs of all travelers
- Provides a formal policy reason to coordinate transportation infrastructure maintenance and improvement projects
- Gives clear support to complete streets elements already in practice
- Includes the need for pedestrians to be able to cross streets as well as travel along them
- Includes not only new road construction, but also street maintenance activities like resurfacing

### Cons:

- May preclude the ability to spread infrastructure improvements across all areas of the city in a given year
- May cause independent project elements to be rescheduled in order to make comprehensive improvements to a street or corridor
- May increase complexity of transportation infrastructure maintenance project planning and execution
- May cause project planning and design to take longer due to inclusion of all elements

Fiscal Impact: This policy will clarify the direction in which the city has been moving with its development regulations, engineering standards, and plans, including already adopted downtown, transit, bicycle and pedestrian plans. Alone, it will have little or no fiscal impact, though with the action steps included in the resolution it would lead to changes in codes, standards, and practices, which are already supported by those adopted plans.

Recommendation: City staff recommends that the PED Committee approve the complete streets policy and move it forward to City Council for consideration.

### Attachments

(1) Complete Streets Policy

## **CITY OF ASHEVILLE COMPLETE STREETS POLICY**

### **Section 1: Complete Streets Policy**

The City of Asheville will plan for, design, construct, operate and maintain appropriate facilities for the travel and as appropriate, resting or parking, of all users in all new construction and retrofit or reconstruction projects subject to the exceptions contained herein. The term “all users” shall include pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and riders, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities,

The City of Asheville understands that maintenance activities do not necessarily trigger requirements for major street improvements and should not be expected to do so. However, maintenance activities do present some opportunities that can improve the environment for other roadway users.

The City of Asheville has and will continue to incorporate Complete Streets principles into the city development plan, area plans, transportation plans, the unified development ordinance (UDO), standards and specifications documents, and other plans, manuals, rules, regulations and programs as appropriate. Implementation of projects supported by adopted plans shall be a priority under this policy.

Complete Streets principles will be applied on all new City projects, privately funded development, and incrementally on existing streets through a series of small improvements and activities over time. All sources of transportation funding, public and private, should be drawn upon to implement Complete Streets within the City of Asheville. The City of Asheville believes that maximum financial flexibility is important to implement Complete Streets principles.

Complete Streets principles will be applied in all street construction, retrofit, and reconstruction projects except in unusual or extraordinary circumstances contained below. Even under the conditions outlined below, a project's impact will be evaluated for the effect it would have on the usefulness of the street for all users, now and in the future, and the ability to implement other adopted plans in the future.

1. Pedestrians and bicyclists are prohibited by law from using the facility. In this case, alternative facilities and accommodations shall be provided within the same transportation corridor, and the ability to reasonably and conveniently cross the facility will be part of the facility design and construction.
2. Where existing right-of-way does not allow for the accommodation of all users. In this case alternatives shall be explored such as obtaining additional right-of-way, use of revised travel lane configurations, paved shoulders, signage, traffic calming, education or enforcement to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, transit vehicles and riders and persons with disabilities.
3. The cost of establishing walkways or bikeways or other accommodations would be disproportionate to the need, particularly if alternative facilities are available within a reasonable walking and/or bicycling distance.
4. Where application of Complete Streets principles is unnecessary or inappropriate because it would be contrary to public safety and increase risk of injury or death.

5. The construction is not practically feasible or cost effective because of unreasonable adverse impacts on the environment or on neighboring land uses, including impact from right-of-way acquisition.
6. Ordinary maintenance activities designed to keep street and other transportation assets in serviceable condition or when interim measures are implemented on temporary detour or haul routes, however, all temporary detours shall comply with temporary traffic control requirements of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
7. Ordinary public works or utility maintenance activities, including, but not limited to: water, sewer and storm sewer main repairs; installation of new or removal of existing water or sewer service lines, installation or repair of fire hydrants, installation or repair of private utility fixtures.

Exclusive of exceptions 6 and 7 above, any determination that a project that will not meet Complete Streets principles based on the above exceptions will have said determination reviewed and confirmed by City Council.

## **Section 2: Severability**

If any provision of this policy or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the other provisions of this policy which may be given effect without the invalid provision or application and, to this end, the provisions of this policy are declared severable.

## **Section 3: Effective Date**

This complete street policy shall be in full force and effect upon passage.